sector, and we are thankful for it. The real question is this. Whenever the Government purchases computer hardwares, all your tenders have a specification that it should come loaded with Microsoft Operating System Windows and Microsoft Office. The cost of this, as charged by the Microsoft, is about Rs. 27,000/-, while the alternative software offered by Linux is only Rs. 1000/-. If your tenders have Microsoft specification in it, nobody will go in for Linux. My point is this. When the Governments of China, France, Germany and other countries have taken a decision to go in for Linux Software, why can't the Government of India also support Linux Software, and not make Microsoft a propriety system in the tenders?

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: We are not supporting anybody exclusively, or opposing anybody.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Procurement of rice and paddy

*245. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any plan to procure rice and paddy by FCI during the current paddy harvesting season;

(b) if so, whether any support price has been fixed for paddy in the current season; and

(c) whether any policy has been adopted for distribution of rice to different States?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) The Food Corporation of India (FCI), alogwith the concerned State Agencies, are already engaged in the procurement of paddy and levy rice as per the existing policy, from the beginning of the Kharif Marketing Season, which commenced on 1st October, 2002.

2. The Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for Fair Average Quality (FAQ) paddy of different varieties has been fixed as below:

Variety of paddy	MSP per quintal
Common	Rs. 530*
Grade 'A'	Rs. 560*

*This does not include the Special Drought Relief Price of Rs. 20 per quintal.

3. Rice is allocated to various State Governments/Union Territory Administrations under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) for distribution to various categories of consumers at fixed Central Issue Prices. In addition, rice is also allocated to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for distribution under other Welfare Schemes.

India's help to safeguard Iranian oil tankers

*246. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Iran has sought India's help to safeguard transiting oil tankers in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

India's share in international IT market

†*247. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICA-TIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether despite swift development of the Indian information technology industry the country's share in international industrial market is only 1.6 per cent and the country depends mainly on North-American market where 67 per cent of software is exported from India; and

(b) if so, the details of the measures taken/proposed to be taken by Government to increase the export of Indian Software to the fast growing markets of Germany, Japan, France and other countries in order to reduce dependence on North-American market?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.